

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

AB 2539 (Ramos) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Tribal-state gaming compacts: ratification.

SUMMARY: This bill increases the amount of time that the legislature has to approve a tribal-state gaming compact between a federally recognized Indian tribe and the State of California (State) during a joint recess from 15 to 20 days. **Specifically, this bill:**

- 1) Extends the time for the Legislature to ratify a tribal-state gaming compact submitted during a joint recess between a federally recognized Indian tribe and the State.
- 2) Provides if the 30-day period ends during a joint recess of the Legislature, the period shall be extended until the 20th day (currently 15 days) following the day on which the Legislature reconvenes.
- 3) Makes technical and clarifying changes.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Through federal law, provides for the negotiation and execution of tribal-state gaming compacts for the purpose of authorizing certain types of gaming on Indian lands within the state Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (IGRA), 18 U.S.C. Sections 1166 to 1168, inclusive and 25 U.S.C. Section 2701, et. seq.
- 2) Authorizes the Governor to negotiate and conclude gaming compacts, subject to ratification by the Legislature, with specified Indian tribes.
- 3) Provides that any other tribal-state gaming compact entered into between the state and a federally recognized Indian tribe that is executed after September 10, 1999, is ratified if it is identical in all material respects to any of the compacts expressly ratified by these provisions and if the compact is not rejected by each house of the Legislature within 30 days of the date of the submission of the compact to the Legislature by the Governor. If the 30-day period ends during a joint recess of the Legislature, existing law extends the period to reject the compact until the 15th day following the day that the Legislature reconvenes.
- 4) Establishes the Indian Gaming Revenue Sharing Trust Fund (RSTF) and the Indian Gaming Special Distribution Fund (SDF) in the State Treasury for the receipt and deposit of moneys received by the state from Indian tribes pursuant to the terms of the gaming compacts entered into with the State of California and authorizes moneys in those funds to be used for certain purposes.
- 5) Authorizes the backfill of the shortfall to the RSTF from the SDF to occur on a quarterly basis rather than at the end of each fiscal year.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill is keyed non-fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill. According to the author's office, "According to the author's office, this bill makes a technical change allowing for additional time if a tribal-state compact is before the California Legislature for ratification and the exclusive period ends during a recess. This provides an additional five days beyond the current 15-day period following the legislature's reconvening."

Background.

In 1988, Congress enacted the IGRA to provide a statutory basis for the operation and regulation of gaming on Indian lands. IGRA provides that an Indian tribe may conduct gaming activity on Indian lands if the activity "is not specifically prohibited by federal law and is conducted within a state which does not prohibit such gaming activity." IGRA further provided for general regulatory oversight at the federal level and created the National Indian Gaming Commission.

IGRA outlines three classes of gaming: (1) Class I gaming (social gaming with minimal prizes and traditional Indian gaming); (2) Class II gaming (bingo and "non-banking card games"); and (3) Class III gaming (all other games, including casino games). IGRA created the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) within the Department of the Interior (DOI) to regulate Class II gaming and some aspects of Class III gaming. IGRA requires Class III gaming to be regulated through compacts between tribes and states with DOI approval.

When a tribe requests negotiations for a Class III compact, IGRA requires the state to negotiate with the Indian tribe in good faith. A compact establishes the terms for conducting, regulating, and enforcing Class III gaming on tribal lands. Furthermore, a compact often outlines requirements for revenue contributions to the state, local governments, and designated funds that benefit non-gaming or limited-gaming tribes.

IGRA provides a comprehensive process to prevent an impasse in compact negotiations, which is triggered when a tribe files suit alleging that the State has refused to negotiate or has failed to negotiate in good faith.

Compact Ratification. The State Constitution, as amended by Proposition 1A of March 2000, permits Indian tribes to conduct and operate slot machines, lottery games, and banked and percentage card games on Indian land. These gambling activities shall only occur if:

- 1) The Governor and an Indian tribe reach agreement on a compact;
- 2) The Legislature approves the compact, and
- 3) The federal government approves the compact.

Upon completion of negotiations, the Governor shall submit a copy of the executed tribal-state compact to the Secretary of State and to both houses of the Legislature for ratification. However, the compact shall not be presented to the Legislature for a ratification vote until the tribe provides written proof of ratification by its governing body.

Existing law provides that any other tribal-state gaming compact entered into between the state and a federally recognized Indian tribe that is executed after September 10, 1999, is ratified if it is identical in all material respects to any of the compacts expressly ratified by these provisions and if the compact is not rejected by each house of the Legislature within 30 days of its

submission. If the 30-day period ends during a joint recess, existing law provides that the period is extended until the 15th day following the day on which the Legislature reconvenes.

This bill extends the time for the Legislature to ratify a tribal-state gaming compact submitted during a joint recess between a federally recognized Indian tribe and the State, from the 15th day to the 20th day following the day on which the Legislature reconvenes.

The State has signed and ratified tribal-state Class III gaming compacts that are currently in effect with 66 tribes. There are currently 65 casinos operated by 62 tribes. Of the 62 tribes, 50 have tribal-state compacts and 12 have Secretarial Procedures. These casinos are regulated by individual tribal gaming agencies, the CGCC, and the DOJ.

Related legislation. AB 1389 (B. Rubio) of 2025. This bill would ratify the second amendment to the tribal-state gaming compact entered into between the State of California and the Yurok Tribe of the Yurok Reservation, California, executed on December 18, 2025, to extend the terms of the tribal-state gaming compact. (Pending on the Senate Floor)

Prior legislation. SB 49 (Grove), Chapter 3, Statutes of 2025. Ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Big Sandy Rancheria of Western Mono Indians of California, executed on December 12, 2024. This bill also ratified the third and fourth amendment to the 1999 tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Tribe.

SB 864 (Padilla), Chapter 244, Statutes of 2025. Ratified separate tribal-state compacts entered into between the State of California and the Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria, the first amendment to the tribal-state compact between the State of California and the Pinoleville Pomo Nation, California, and the first amendment to the tribal-state compact between the State of California and the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation, executed on July 30, 2025.

AB 1527 (Soria), Chapter 202, Statutes of 2025. Ratified the Fourth Amendment to the Tribal-State Gaming Compact entered into between the State of California and the Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California, executed on June 4, 2025, which would further extend its expiration date to December 31, 2026.

AB 2032 (Jim Patterson), Chapter 304, Statutes 2024. Ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Big Sandy Rancheria of Western Mono Indians, executed on January 16, 2024.

AB 2656 (Ramos), Chapter 313, Statutes of 2024. Ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Table Mountain Rancheria, executed on November 1, 2023.

AB 3276 (Ramos), Chapter 319, Statutes of 2024. Ratified the tribal-state gaming compact between the State of California and the Tule River Tribe, executed on June 25, 2024.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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